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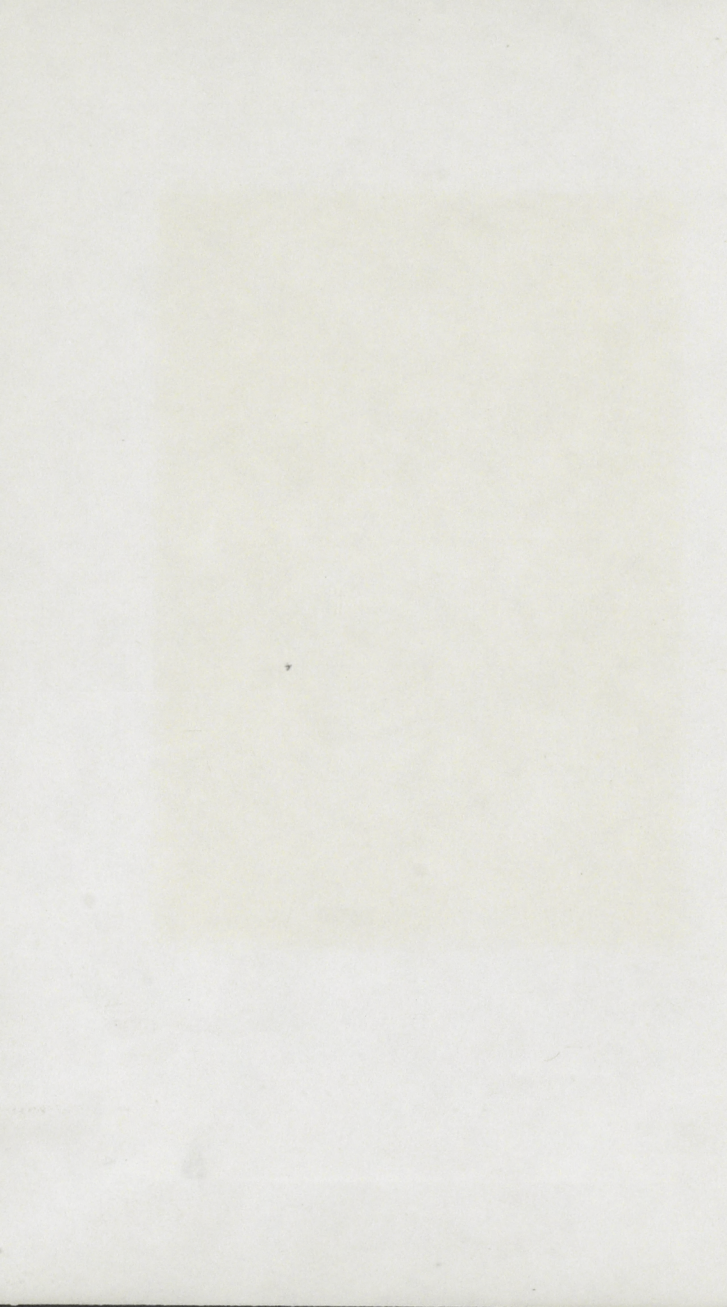
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CREATIVE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the following:

Professor ODGEN TURNER — staff adviser, sculpture photography, HENRY KALEN, (unless indicated), OREST ROMANYK — patron solicitor, WILLIAM B.C. deLINT — layout artist, the PATRONS and the people who submitted work for this book.

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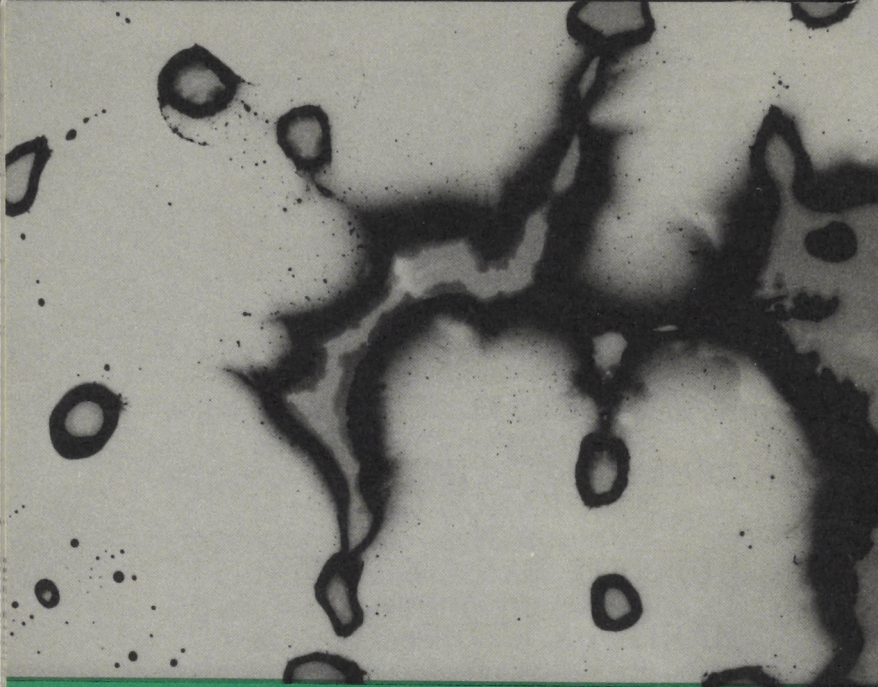
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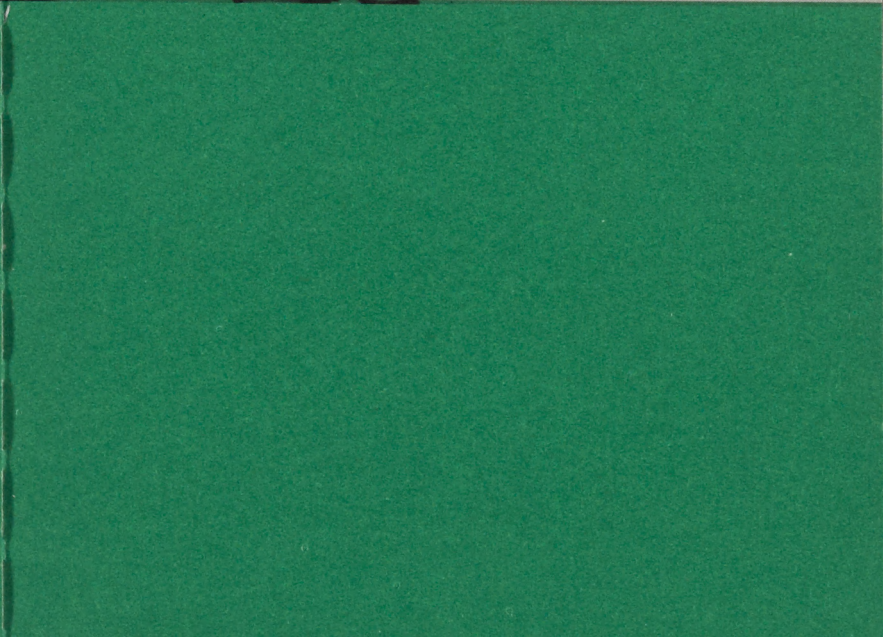
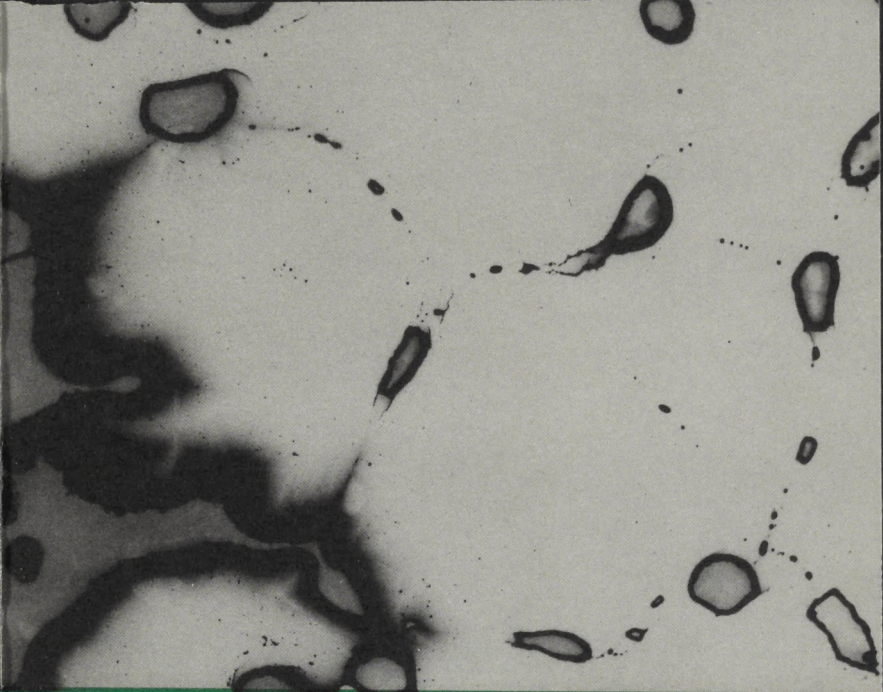
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Published annually by the University of Manitoba Students' Union, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

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FLEDGELINGS

For the freedom of flight,

Dear Lord, be praised —

We rise in spite

Of being raised.



IN



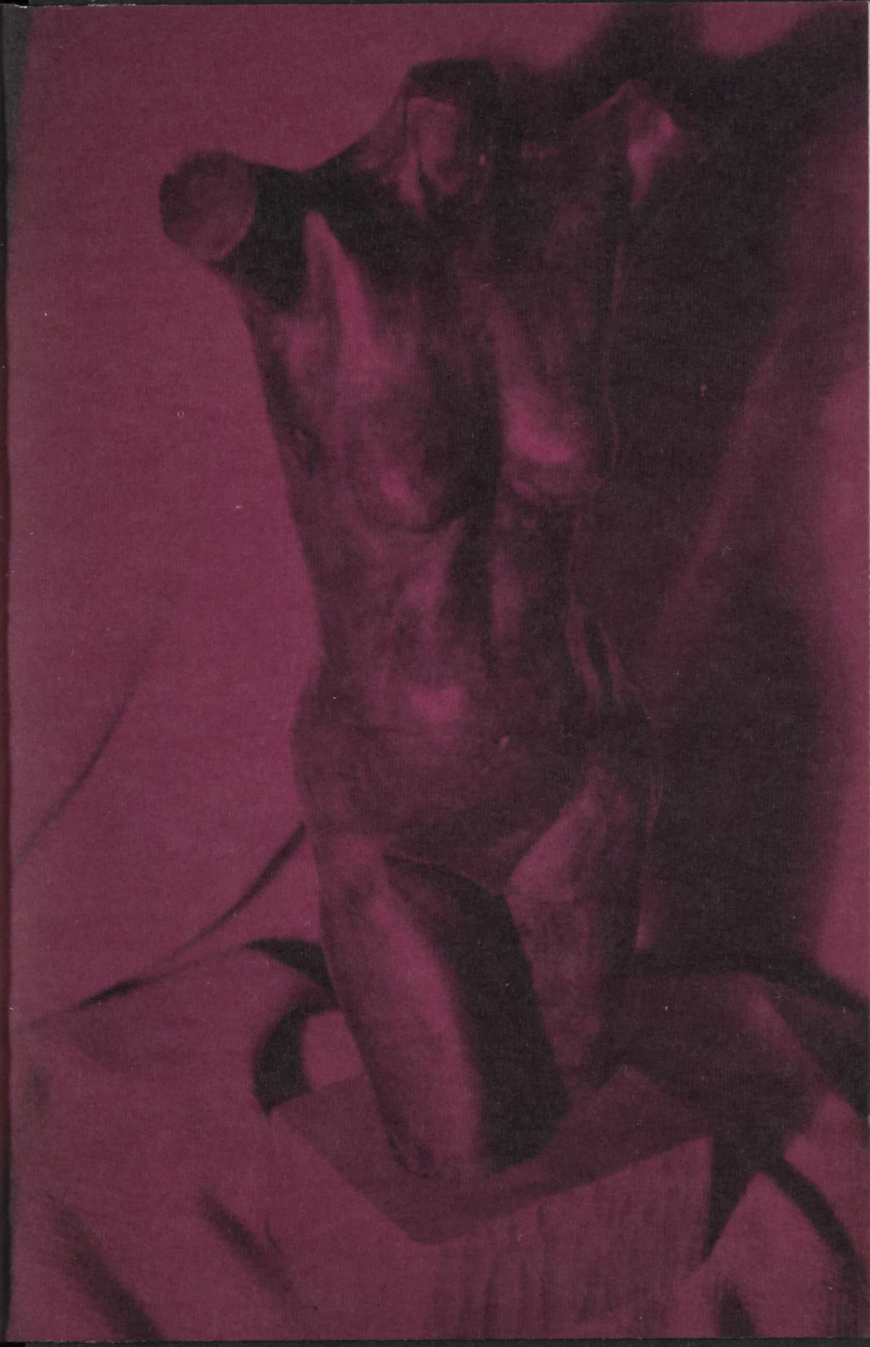
*Wir kannten nicht sein unerhörtes Haupt,
darin die Augenäpfel reiften. Aber
sein Torso glüht noch wie ein Kandelaber,
in dem sein Schauen, nur zurückgeschraubt,
sich hält und glänzt. Sonst könnte nicht der Bug
der Brust dich blenden, und im leisen Drehen
der Lenden könnte nicht ein Lächeln gehen
zu jener Mitte, die die Zeugung trug.*

*Sonst stünde dieser Stein entstellt und kurz
unter der Schultern durchsichtigem Sturz
und flimmerte nicht so wie Raubtierfelle
und bräche nicht aus allen seinen Rändern
aus wie ein Stern: denn da ist keine Stelle,
die dich nicht sieht. Du musst dein Leben ändern.*

ARCHAIC TORSO OF APOLLO

We never knew the wonder of his head
where shone the ripening apples of his eyes.
But still his torso, candelabra-wise,
glows where his gaze, now down and inward led
still burns. Or why should the bow of his breast
so dazzle, or in subtle turning
of loins a smile play that goes there yearning
to that mid-place that held the seeds at rest?

Or else this stone, a maimed stump would cover
under the shoulders' sloped transparent power
and would not shine like pelts of beasts of prey
nor break out from all contours of the knife
like star's rays: for as you gaze and stay
no place but sees you. You must change your life.



MASSACRE ISLAND

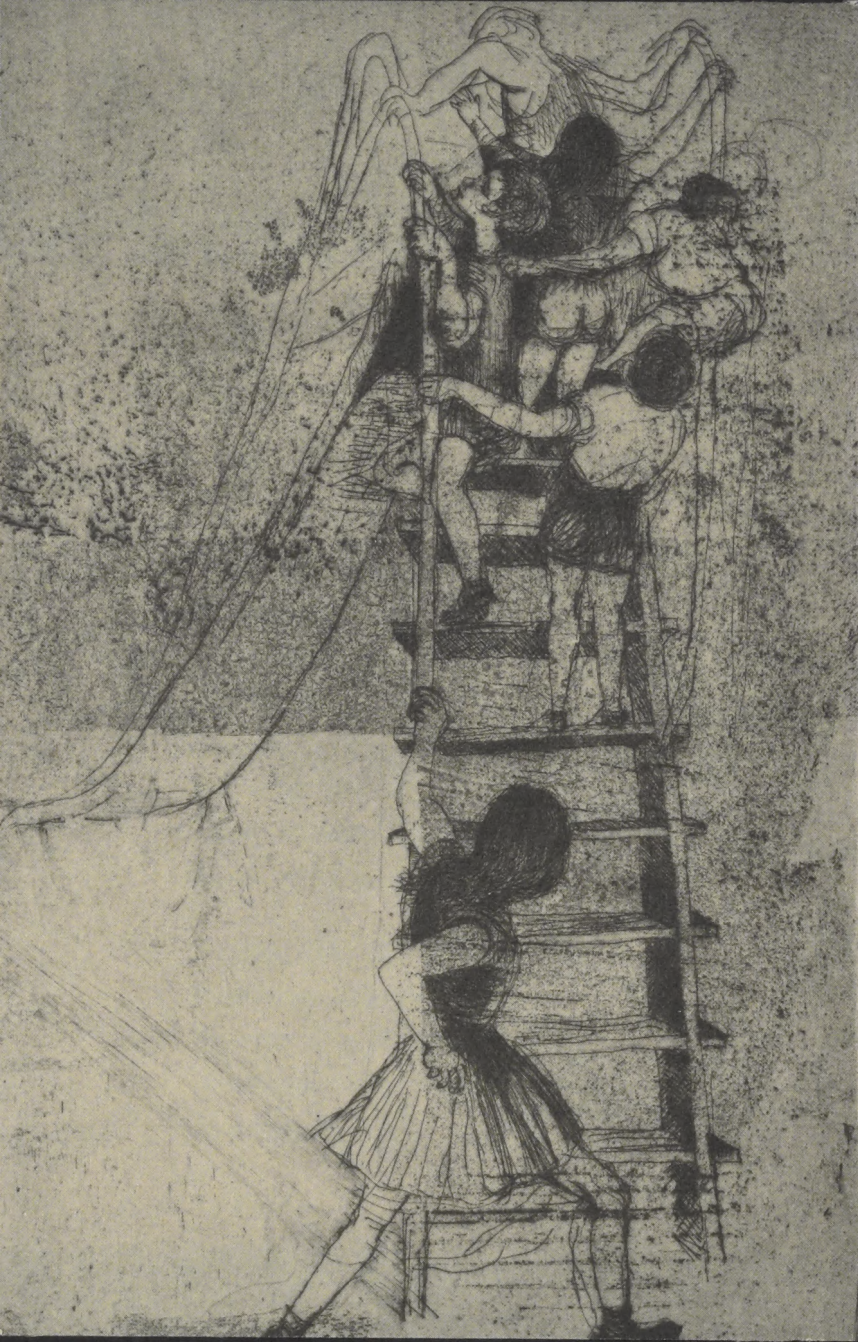
The island lies somnolent;
A mossy-backed intrusion
On the storm-streaked waters
Of the lake,
Guanoed by the cormorant
But silent now
For even floating gulls
Forsake the spot.

Nothing lives on that dead rock
Except the lichen and the fly
And parodies of living trees
Grotesquely claw at skudding clouds
And rake the sky.

INDIAN GIRL IN ANTHROPOLOGY CLASS

She was never
of pug-nosed skull
and fossil-bone,
never fumbled
up from the dust
at an ape-angle ;
never grunted,
with nostrils hard
and palate a sponge
to dust-grains,
for a fire-branch :

she is of cedar cinnamon
and sugar-spun ebony,
and her eyes—
two untipped spires
of Taj Mahal
await
such mahogany.



WATCH OUT FOR RONNIE

I am writing this as a warning to all of you who haven't yet met Ronnie Stimpson. I don't know what can be done for those of you who have met him—perhaps see a doctor, though I doubt if that will be of any help—but for those of you who haven't, what I have to say here is very important. The whole future of your life depends upon your not meeting Ronnie. I've met Ronnie and I know. He moved into our neighbourhood two weeks ago. I've already told everybody around here to keep away from him, but nobody will listen, and so I've decided to make my appeal directly to the presses of the world, in an attempt to safeguard mankind.

First of all, I guess I should tell you how I found out about Ronnie. Well, it didn't take me long, let me tell you. I'm not dumb like Gordie and Betty—they *were* two of my friends. Now they hang around with Ronnie.

The day I met him was one of the last before school was let out for the summer. I was pretty sure I was going to pass to Grade Five, but Miss Pringlesting was being nasty, as usual, and I couldn't be absolutely certain. Our house is one street over from the school, and Gordie, Betty and I always

sneak through Mr. Bloomhoff's yard—he lives opposite the school—so that we don't have to walk all the way around the block to get home. We have to be careful that Mr. Bloomhoff doesn't see us, because he raises chickens in his backyard and he's always scared that we're going to turn them loose again, like we did last Hallowe'en. Whenever he does see us, we have to climb up the tree in his backyard really fast. He's old and can't climb up after us, and we tease him while we're in the branches and he's swearing up at us. The tree leans over my father's garage, and we can climb onto the roof from one of the limbs and then walk over to the other side of the garage and jump down into my backyard. Betty had almost got us caught that day, two weeks ago, because she's so slow, and if Gordie hadn't given her a boost with his shoulder, we would never have gotten up the tree in time.

When I climbed up the tree, I went right on past the level of the roof. Gordie and Betty had jumped down into my backyard before they realized that I wasn't with them. They looked back, but when they saw I intended to climb right to the top of the tree, they went home for dinner. Mr. Bloomhoff was swearing as usual, but the wind was strong and I could hardly hear him. His words were being pushed from his mouth almost before he spoke them and carried like tiny whirlwinds of soot all about the yard. His chickens were making a terrible racket, and Mr. Bloomhoff, hearing himself clucked down, finally gave up trying to frighten me and went into his house for lunch. The wind spun me around in dizzying circles as I clung to the uppermost branches. That tree must be the oldest in the city, almost two hundred years, I'd guess. It was here long before any white man settled in this territory; in fact, it's

probably one of the few living things the white men didn't destroy when they built this city. Often, when I'm in the uppermost branches, as I was that day, swinging in the wind, I think that the Indians in this region must have first seen the white man from that tree. I'm sure that the tree must have had some sort of spell cast upon it by the medicine-man of hereabouts, so that it would stay alive as long as the white man remained, and even turn into a giant if anyone tried to harm it, a giant who could destroy the whole city just as easily as the white men had cleared away the Indian villages that were once here. Now you may laugh if you want to, but I've never seen anyone yet dare to hack off one branch of that tree, not even Mr. Bloomhoff.

I was high up in the tree when my mother came into the backyard looking for me. I tried to hide among the branches, but the leaves weren't as thick there as they are down below, and I could see my mother gasp as she caught sight of me. The sun was reflecting off my eyes so that they must have looked dazed and jewel-like as I swung round with the wind. My mother always gets frightened when she sees me in the tree—I don't know why; none of the branches have ever broken when I've rested my weight against them. But when she almost screamed that I come down and have lunch, I did as she asked. Her face turned pale when I jumped from the garage to the ground—I usually climb from the roof to the side-fence and then jump—but I had thought to make her happy by letting her see me safely on the ground very quickly, so that she would not have long to worry.

She had just put my plate of soup on the table when Gordie came rushing into the

house. "There's a new kid on the street, Michael," he shouted with the last of his breath. I stared at the table and then at the spoon I'd just been raising to my lips. Gordie, who is shorter than I am and a little pudgy, looked impatiently from me to my mother, whose face, while she filled her own plate, was very calm, as if she still hadn't noticed that Gordie was in the house. I didn't say anything, but instead dipped by spoon into the soup again. "Michael, there's a new kid on the street," he repeated excitedly. The soup, I decided, didn't taste very good, anyway, and I darted quickly away from the table. Just before the steel spring banged the outside door shut, I'd heard my mother calling for me to wait until after dinner, but this was important; a new kid can ruin a street worse than even the biggest and meanest dog.

We went half-way down the block until we came to the store that Mr. Scharfstein, the tailor, had once owned. Sitting on the raised step at the front of the store was Ronnie Stimpson. He was blond, wiry, had on a pale-blue shirt and, even though it was hot, was wearing a white tie. And I took a dislike to him at once. Someone shouted from down the street, and I looked up to see Betty running towards us. She tried to skip once or twice, but after getting tangled up in her own legs and almost falling she gave that up. The three of us ignored Ronnie and looked in the windows, hoping to see his mother or father. The store was empty, though—his parents were probably in the rooms behind—and all that we could see were several sewing machines. We looked harder and then were able to make out a big bundle of cloth in one corner.

"They're flags," said Betty. "Millions of red flags."

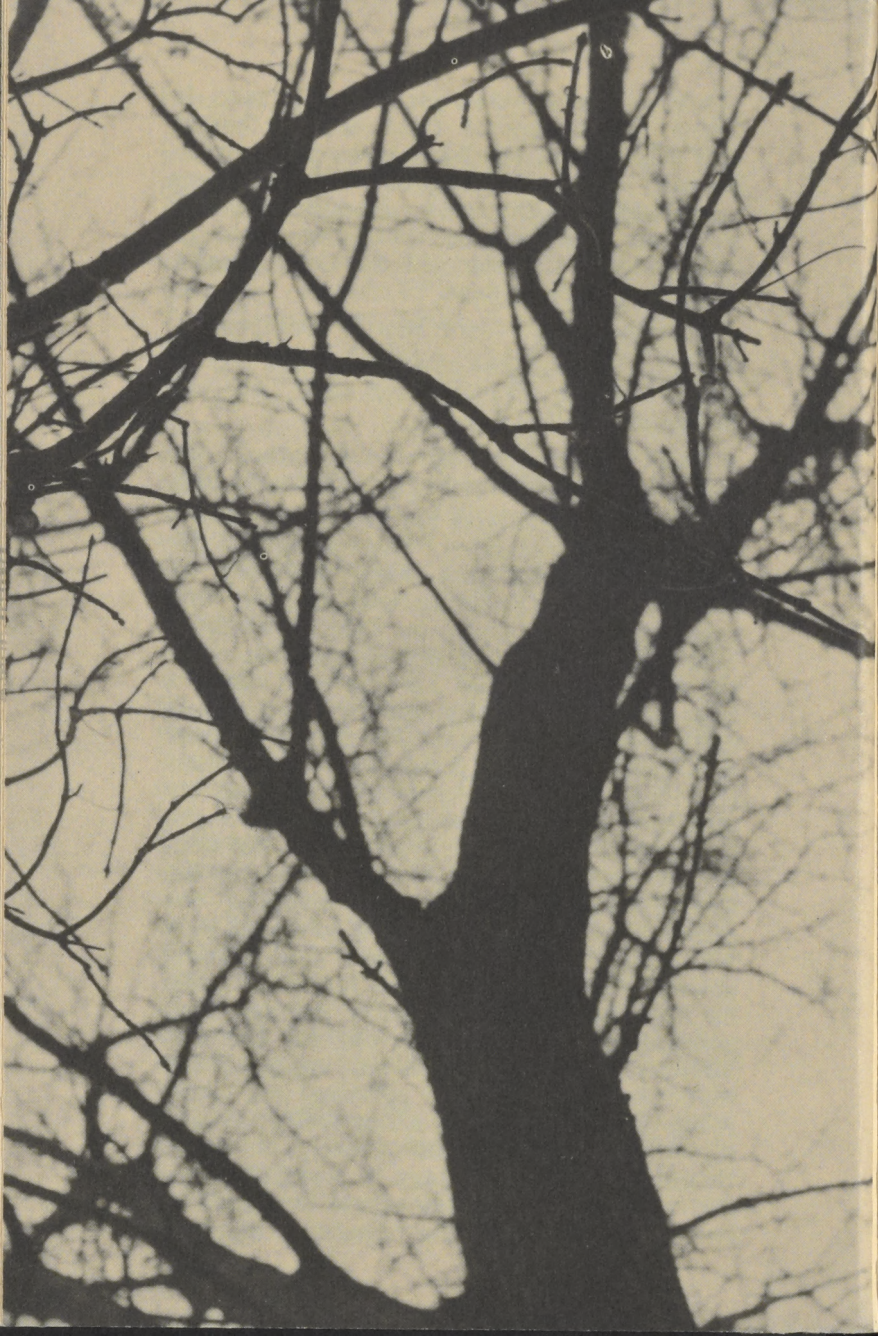
I remembered war pictures I'd seen in which the bodies of dead sailors, before they'd been slid into the waves of the awaiting sea, had been wrapped in flags. There just couldn't be that many dead men waiting for their red flags so that they could be lowered into the emerald-sparkling depths. "They can't all be flags," I said.

"They're flags," said Ronnie Stimpson.

We turned and looked down at him. Gordie took a few steps forward and said, "Are you calling my friend a liar?"

"If he says those aren't all flags in the store, I am," said Ronnie, getting to his feet.

Rushing at him with his fists clenched into stones, Gordie shouted, "Wan'a fight?" He was about to hit him when suddenly we heard a voice, exploding with thunder and rage, strike out behind us. "Get away from here you—" Ronnie's father had just come out of the store, and he was mad. He's a huge man, with a big round face and a body more solid-looking than any man's I'd ever seen before. I nearly jumped half-way across the street when he shouted at us. Betty screamed and began running, but before she had passed more than three houses, she tripped over the terror pursuing her along the sidewalk, and sitting down abruptly, she began to cry. Gordie, caring, as usual only for himself when in danger, was running smoothly and evenly towards his home, when he happened to look towards me and then suddenly shouted, "Watch out for the car, Michael!" Just as I turned my head, I heard the screaming warning of tires and horn. A big dark car was only a few feet away and its wheels were pointed directly at me. I thought of those red flags in Ronnie's store and myself lying on the street, wrapped in one of them. I raced the remaining distance



across the street, ran through my yard, climbed the side fence and clambered up the garage roof and hid among the branches of the tree—all in not much more than a second, I'm sure. Some people came into the yard searching for me, looked behind the house and along the side of the garage and then left. They were friends of Ronnie's, I decided. They had tried to kill me on the street, and having failed, they had followed me into the backyard. Well, I knew what I would have to do. They weren't going to use any of those flags for people on this street. No longer trembling, I went into the house and had my dinner. My Mum was angry because of my being so late for lunch, but I let her shout at me and would not tell her what had happened and what I planned to do.

There was nobody in the playground when I got to school—the bell had rung while I was finishing my share of the cantaloupe Mum had bought—and I didn't have a chance to speak with Gordie and Betty before going into the classroom. I wasn't able to talk with them during recess, either, because Miss Pringlesting was mad and kept me in. At four, though, when I was pushing against the big door to get out, they came rushing up to me.

"We met Ronnie at recess," she said excitedly.

"Did you get him?" I asked Gordie, as we both pushed against the door and finally got it open.

They both became silent, and I thought for a moment Gordie had been beaten.

"He's nice," said Betty.

"He helped us beat Room Twelve at baseball," added Gordie.

"He's a spy," I said; "and he means to kill us all."

They both shook their heads, thinking that I was wrong, so I told them about the flags and the war pictures. "Who do you think he's making them for, if not for us?"

"Maybe," said Gordie, "maybe he's making them for schools."

"There aren't *that* many schools," I said; "and besides, even the flags which are made for schools are only to keep reminding us of the people who have died in the war. What do you think flags are hung on?" I asked of them suddenly. I could see from their faces that they were almost on my side now. "They're made from trees they've killed and chopped down and skinned of their flesh right down to their skeletons. That's what those shiny, smooth poles are — dead skeletons."

They both looked at me dumbly. "What are we going to do?" asked Gordie in almost a whisper.

"What we should have done at dinner-time," I said; "chop off his head. We may have to wait until evening, but when we find him, that's what we'll do."

"He said he'd meet us here after four," said Betty, her voice trembling.

"Good, we'll wait." We sat down on the steps of the school and waited.

After we'd been waiting awhile, the Grade Six teacher, Mr. Dollincrunch, came out of the school and rang the bell for the patrols to go off duty. We could still hear the last sounds of it ringing in our ears when Ronnie Stimpson walked into the schoolyard. Betty didn't say very much as we started towards Mr. Bloomhoff's yard, but Gordie and I were able to talk with Ronnie well enough so that he wouldn't realize what we planned to do.

Betty started climbing up the tree first, but when she was only half-way up to the

garage roof, she stopped and pointed towards the chicken coops. "Look, one of them has gotten loose," she said.

When she'd stopped climbing, I had at first thought she'd seen Mr. Bloomhoff coming out of the house after us, but following the direction of her hand, I saw that one of the chickens had gotten free. It had lost many of its feathers and its skin had a smudged reddish-black color about it. When it started coming towards us, we all shrank back and shouted at Betty to hurry up and get onto the roof, but she was too frightened to listen. "I think it's sick and has an inspecktious disease," she almost screamed. Luckily, the chicken turned away from us and with prancing hops moved towards the fence. It waved its wings and tried to leap outside the yard, but Mr. Bloomhoff had built his fences high.

Betty finally got onto the garage roof, and we climbed quickly up the tree after her. Once on the roof we all sat and watched as the bird struggled frantically to reach the top of the fence and then flop mopishly onto the ground again. I began to wonder what would happen if the bird should get out of the yard. It would go racing about the streets, avoiding pursuers with its long prancing hops and spreading its disease all over the city.

"That bird's dangerous," said Ronnie Stimpson.

Surprised, we all looked at Ronnie, and I began to wonder if I hadn't been mistaken about what I'd thought of him. Little did I then realize just how cunning and treacherous he was. "You're right I said, not yet understanding that he was purposely directing our attention away from himself.

"I'll get my father to phone the Humane Society," he said.

"Oh, no, you won't," I replied. "They gas animals there until they choke to death. That chicken shouldn't be made to suffer." As you can see, I wasn't completely taken in by him. I knew that the only reason he wanted the chicken gassed was so that his father could sell the Society a red flag for its body when they buried it. "We'll kill it ourselves," I said.

He seemed to know, even though I hadn't told him, how we were going to do it, for as soon as I'd spoken, he got up, walked to the other side of the garage roof, jumped to the ground and several minutes later returned with a small log of wood from his backyard. While he'd been gone, I'd gotten the hatchet from the house.

Betty watched from the roof as Gordie chased after the chicken. The chicken was a wonderful runner, and we were beginning to hope that Gordie never would catch it, but just as it was trying to hop out of his way once, near the fence, Gordie dived and caught it by the legs. The chicken beat its wings against Gordie's face, and he began yelling that maybe now he had caught the disease, but I told him that if he took a hot bath and used plenty of soap, he'd be safe, most likely. Ronnie took the chicken from Gordie, and keeping it at arm's length, carried it to the log. I swung the hatchet. The steel head went "ker-thud" as it pushed its way into the wood. I thought that I'd missed, and for several moments, just after I'd taken the swing, with the setting sun floating its reddish-purple light through the green branches of the tree, I saw the chicken's eyes staring up at me, its beak pecking at the earth. Gordie and Betty were shouting, and, looking up, I saw the chicken near the fence, beating its wings so that it could get out of the yard. And

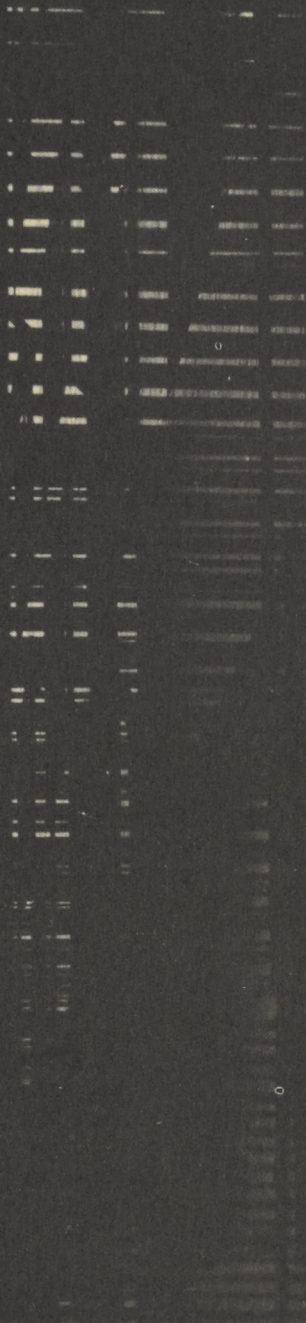
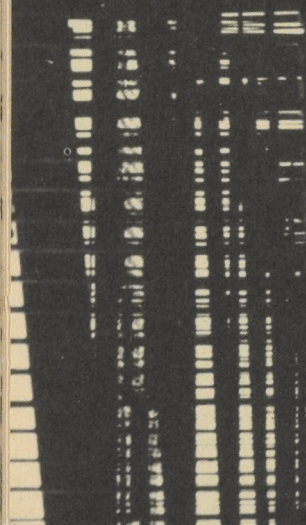
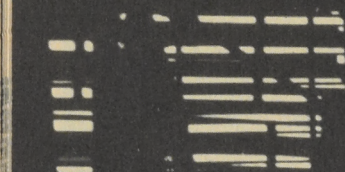
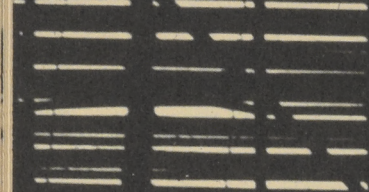
Ronnie Stimpson was kicking it into the air like a football. I hadn't missed. I had tried to save the chicken pain by not letting the Humane Society choke it to death, and now it was suffering a thousand times worse. "Get away from that chicken," I shouted at Ronnie and took after him with the hatchet. Ronnie kept chasing the chicken and I kept chasing Ronnie. Round and round the yard we went until the bird tripped over the log and suddenly stopped moving. Ronnie and I stopped, too. Tears began running down my cheeks, and when Ronnie saw them, he laughed. Gordie and Betty laughed with him. They thought I was crying because the chicken was dead, but the bird's death had come as a relief to me; I was thinking of the thundering furnaces of pain through which I had put the chicken before it had died.

And then I realized that the chicken hadn't been diseased at all, not diseased, I mean, in the way that Ronnie was. The chicken had been cooped up within the yard, but Ronnie was free to move around as he wished, spread his sickness among innocent folk without them ever trying to protect themselves; and he had no smudged reddish-black skin that would warn people, only the way he laughed and talked and acted. His father wouldn't be able to use one of his red flags for the chicken—I'd seen to that—but looking at Ronnie, I just knew that he was after bigger game. He was after live people.

"Get out of here," I shouted at him. "You, too," and I looked at Gordie and Betty. As Gordon and Ronnie started climbing up to the garage roof, I felt the tree begin to quiver. The spell that the Indian medicine-man had cast upon the tree was still alive. I swung the hatchet into the trunk, but noth-

ing happened. I climbed up the tree, right to the top until I was clinging to branches I'd never dared to rest my weight against before. From up there I could still see the sun, but when I tried to catch sight of Gordie or Betty, who couldn't have been more than a half block away, the houses blocked my view. I realized then that they and Ronnie Stimpson would become good friends. They thought I was a sissy for crying because of the chicken and would no longer listen to my warnings about Ronnie. I stayed up in the tree for hours, trying to explain to it why it must become a giant but it only swayed in the wind, and as the night became heavier, tiny stars nestled among its branches. A little after lights appeared within the windows of the house, my Mum came outside to call me in for supper, but she couldn't see me because of the darkness of the leaves, and, after calling my name a few times, she went away. Alone with the tree again, I began to wonder if it might not remain as it was until almost everyone in the world had caught Ronnie's sickness and was buried in one of his father's red flags. I saw them travelling from city to city, Ronnie making friends and touching people with his hands, while his father busily measured out how much red cloth he would need. Right then and there I decided that I just couldn't wait for the tree to change into a giant who would burn those flags, destroy the sickness killing everybody. Instead I decided to warn people about Ronnie, and if they didn't listen—as they haven't, mainly because Mr. Bloomhoff has been going around the neighborhood saying that I'm the one that should be guarded against—to write this story telling everybody just what happened that day, two weeks ago. So watch out for Ronnie. He'll try to get you if he can—really, he will.





THE STEPS OF THE ORANGERY

Versailles

Like worn-out kings who ultimately stride
without a purpose, only now and then
to shew the bowing suite on either side
the loneliness within the mantle's hem—

even so the steps between the balustrades
which from the first bowed to the empty air,
climb slowly upwards, likewise by God's grace,
towards the sky and lead not anywhere;

as though they had commanded all their horde
to stay behind and not approach again,
and none might venture of his own accord
even to come and lift the heavy train.

STEEL AND CONCRETE

We live in a forest
Of steel and concrete,
Where carbon clouds
Cough lemon lightning,
Spit plastic rainbows;
Where the earth vomits
Radioactive roses,
Where iron ideas
Flourish in steel soil.
We live in a land
of rubber sunsets,
Where the cosmos
Is condensed in pills,
And wisdom wrapped in cellophane.

N.O
LEFT
TURN

NO
STOPPING

BUS STOP

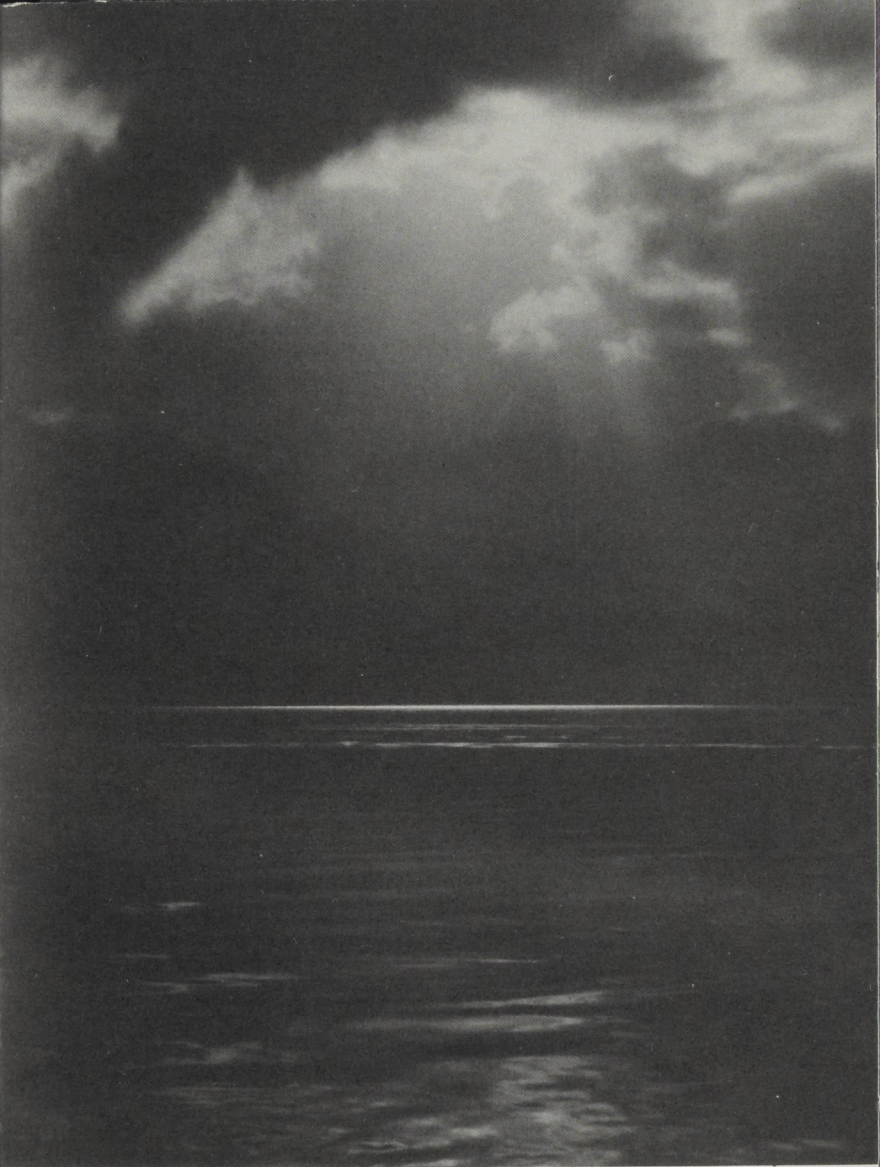
McGREGOR
SALTER
SELKIRK

MOORE'S

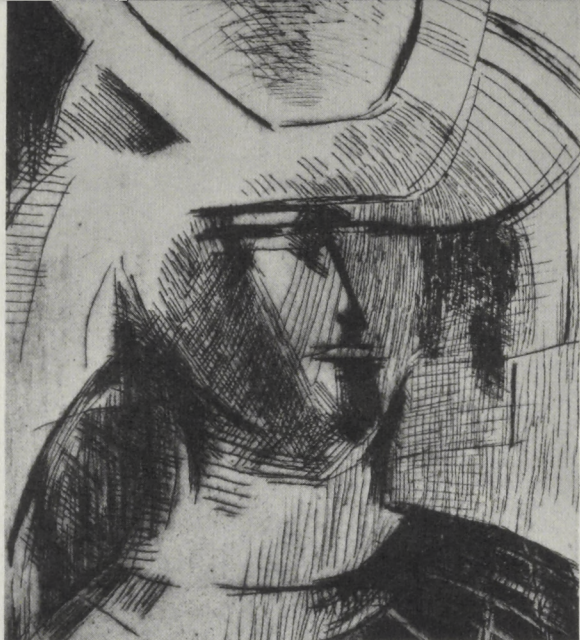
I laughed
and listened;
as we swayed
to moon-music.

I caught him with his eyelids down,
and I was almost sixteen
again.

MOON



MUSIC



Only he who has lifted the lyre
among shades descending,
guessing the whole, may aspire
to give praise without ending.

On him who the poppy has tasted
with the dead there, alone,
nevermore is their lightest sound wasted,
never lost, their least tone.

Even in the pond, like a breath
images fleet and flow:
Share in, and learn, all.

In the twin-realm of life and death
only, do voices grow
mild and eternal.

*Nur wer die Leier schon hob
auch unter Schatten,
darf das unendliche Lob
ahnend erstatten.*

*Nur wer mit Toten vom Mohn
ass, von dem ihren,
wird nicht den leisesten Ton
wieder verlieren.*

*Mag auch die Spiegung im Teich
oft uns verschwimmen:
Wisse das Bild.*

*Erst in dem Doppelbereich
werden die Stimmen
ewig und mild.*

SONNET TO ORPHEUS

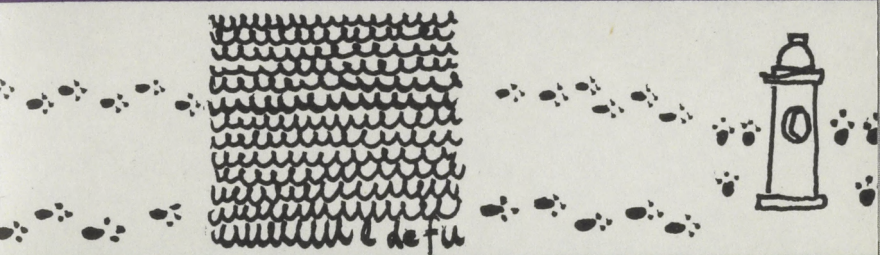
Only he who has lifted the lyre
in the kingdom of shades, underground,
may praise without sending, nor tire,
but feel the full round.

He must eat of the poppy, nor fear
with the dead to experience all;
then the least of their signs on his ear
nor vainly will fall.

Even in the pond, like a breath,
images break and unroll:
Be in them: such knowledge is sure.

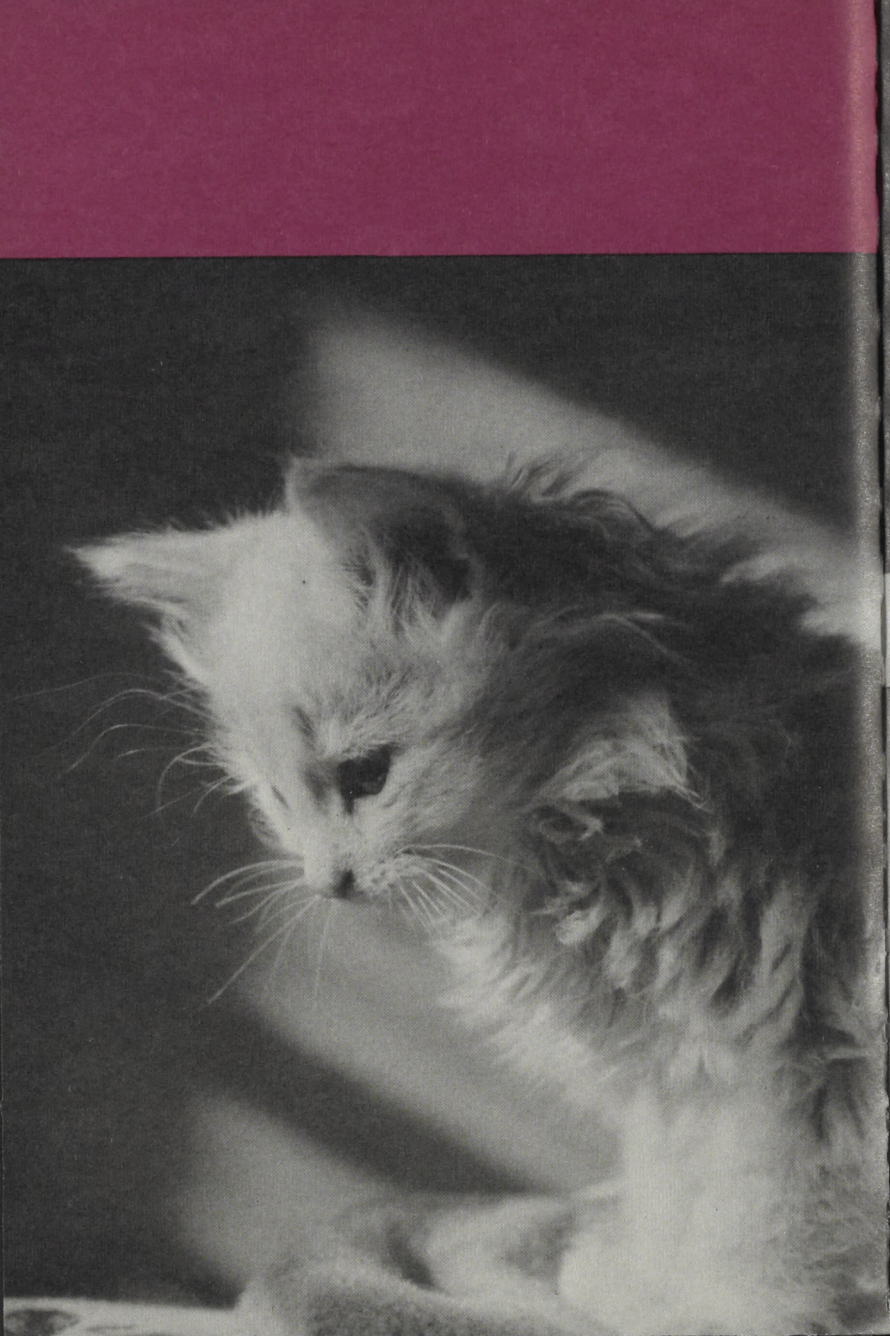
Only when doubled by death
is the poet's voice rounded and whole,
immortal, mature.





DOGGIE TROT

Tree for two,
And two for tree,
A shrub for you,
A bush for me,
And though you deserve a broadloom rug,
I'll meet you at the fire plug.





QUICKLY

Kiss me now
when cheeks are firm
and laughter light
and murmuring warm,
when comfort hangs
in dusk, and lies
in sharp of leaves
and cricket-cries,
when stardrops tumble
and tingle the brow
with melting serum,
oh, kiss me now,
when half-sleep thoughts
and spring forever
balance on dreams
and want no summer.

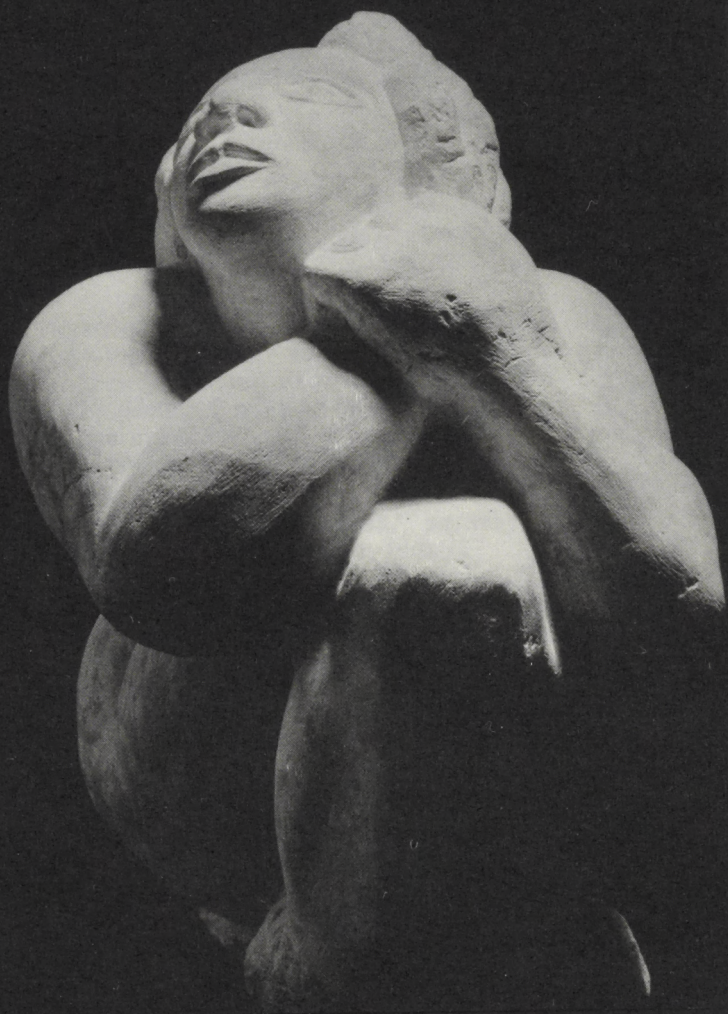
Quickly, before
the dust-rains dry
and cushion the stars
above the sky,
and cinders fall,
and catch below
warm hearts to burn,
oh, kiss me now,
for death will come—
the skies are tight,
and warming trembles
herald the night.

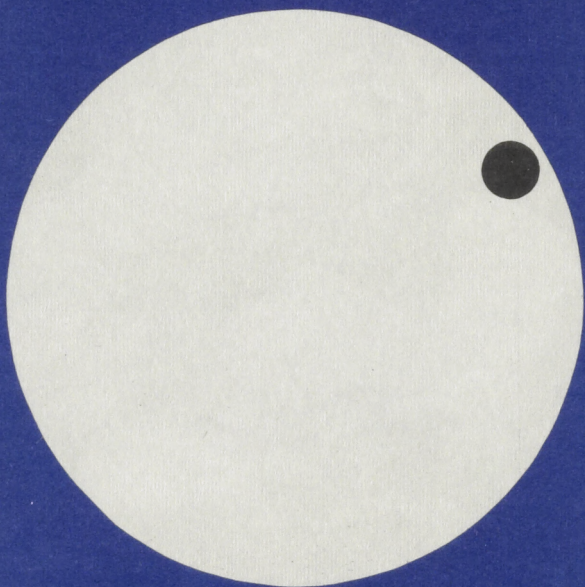












MENS SANA....

It was ten minutes later than his usual Saturday-night time when Bert Woods pushed open the swing door of the "Dog and Duck." He lounged over to the bar, rested a foot on the brass rail and supported the rest of his considerable weight on two elbows on the polished counter.

"Pint o' wallop, Daisy ducks," he said to the barmaid. "And 'ow are we today?"

She flashed him a professional smile, but didn't make any reply, and he didn't seem to expect one, for he turned round and began to scan the tables set back in the alcoves round the pub walls. He located his pal, Alf Pringle, already established in their favourite place, not too near the loud-speaker which was pouring out jazz, and out of the draught which came in every time the door swung open.

"Ta, Daisy, that's the girl!" he said absently when she brought his drink. He made his way, with the glass of beer in his

hand, to where his friend was sitting.

"Wotcher, Alf!" he said, easing his bulk behind the marble-topped table.

"Wotcher, Bert!" Alf echoed his greeting, adding "'Ere's mud in yer eye!" as he raised his glass.

"Cheers!" Bert downed half of his pint at a swallow, and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "Sorry I'm late tonight. Had a bit of a dust-up with the kid, and Alice reckoned she 'ad to go 'n comfort 'im, an' tea got late. Comfort!" He spat expertly into the sand-filled spittoon. "Wot 'e wants is a good taste of the strap on 'is behind."

"Wot's 'e bin up to?" asked Alf, ready for a juicy story of juvenile delinquency. He was a weedy individual, with a sallow complexion and a weak chin. He acted as audience to Bert at these Saturday sessions, and privately thought Bert "no end of a chap."

"Well," began Bert, shifting comfortably into his corner," it all started with me going into the kid's room to look for the paper. 'E takes it in there sometimes for somethin' or other 'is teacher sez to look up for school, see, 'e generally remembers to bring it back in the kitchen, 'cause I bawled 'im out once before when I couldn't find it. But 'im and 'is Mum was both out, so I looked 'igh and low, and last I goes into 'is bedroom to see if it was there. Well, I didn't see it around nowhere, so I looks under the bed, and what's there but 'alf a dozen books I never seen before."

Alf's eyes glinted, and he prepared a leering smile. He had always wanted to send off for some of those books the fellows at school told him about, and sometimes let him look at in the washroom. But he was dead scared his mother would see him take them from

the postman or something—anyway, she'd have found out, and half-killed him.

Bert swallowed slowly. He had a good tale to unfold, an appreciative audience, and the evening before him.

"Well, I picked 'em up, naturally—I reckon a father got to keep an eye on what 'is kid reads. I 'ad a pretty good idea what it'd be—I remember my Dad give me a good lickin' one time when 'e found some stuff a boy at school lent me to take 'ome. But what do you think they was? Two lib'ary books (an' I told 'im months ago to turn in 'is lib'ary ticket; wastin' 'is time readin' when 'e could be doin' somethin' useful,) an' four other books, with paper covers, wot 'e musta bought or borrowed somewhere. They'd seen a lotta use."

"What was they about?" Alf felt the suspense had gone on long enough.

"Well, 'ere's the laugh, see. One o' the lib'ary books was called "The 'Istory of Philosophy for Young People," and the other was "Understanding Poetry."

Alf felt let down. "What about the paper books?" he asked none too hopefully.

"One was called 'The Portable Plato'," he said with disgust, "an' one 'Great Thoughts from Aristotle'. The other two was poetry, or so they said. One of 'em 'ad some of them airy-fairy pomes about lonely seashores 'n stuff, like we 'ad in the readers at school, when me an' George Flack useter make up some other words and say 'em under our breath when we was all saying 'em out together." He laughed appreciatively at the memory of his and George's wit.

"But the other one, that was by some chap called Thomas, but that wasn't 'is first name. One o' these fancy names it was, like you

couldn't rightly tell if it was a bloke or some woman. But I reckon it wasn't no female; when I starts to read some of the stuff in there it fair made my 'air curl. An' not two lines rhyming in the 'ole shoot. Funny sorta poetry, that." He finished his beer, and Alf, who felt there was more to come, though disappointed in his initial hopes, picked up the glasses and took them across for refilling. Back at the table, he waited till Bert had taken an initial swig, and then proffered the prompting question which made him such a good audience.

"Where does 'e get them sorta ideas from?" he asked.

"Well, I dunno for sure," replied Bert, picking his teeth with a matchstick. "But I suspect it's from 'is Mum. She useter read a lot one time, till I put me foot down. Got on me nerves it did, whenever I wanted to talk, she'd 'ave 'er nose in a book. Oh, she'd put it down an' listen to me alright, but she always looked as though she fair 'ated to 'ave to leave 'er dear, darling stories an' 'ark to 'er boring ole 'usband. So I went off the deep end one night. I picked up 'er books—'ole pile of 'em she 'ad on the shelf and chucked 'em on the floor. What you want to read all that for? I asks her. Dostoyevsky, Tolstoi, Ibsen—lot of bloody Russian Communists if you ask me."

"She went all red, an' then white, and looked as if she'd like to bite me, but all she says, 'Ibsen was a Norwegian,' she says."

"'Bloody Communists all the same, I bet,' I says, Oh, I was a bit lit up alright, that night, but this reading business 'ad been gettin' me down for a long time."

"If you've got so much time on your 'ands, you better get a job," I says to her.

“‘Alright, I will,’ she says, ‘but you can stop throwing my books around,’ says she, looking cold as hell at men, like I never seen her look before. Didn’t know she ’ad that much spirit left in ’er, to tell the truth. Anyway, I chucked down a couple more, just to show ’oo was boss, and when I came ’ome the next day she’d put ’em all out of sight and said she ’ad a job. She wouldn’t tell me what it was at first, but I wasn’t going to put up with that nonsense an’ I told ’er so. So eventually she says she’d been to the local lib’ary, and they wanted someone to mend up and fix the books when they come back in torn an’ messed up, and said she could try it out. Well, I felt kinda mad, as if she’d got back at me, like, about the books, but it was a full-time job alright, an’ I reckoned if they was payin’ ’er they wouldn’t be giving ’er much time to read the books she was mending. She ’as ’er ’ands full now to keep ’ouse ’n cook ’n that when she gets ’ome. I never seen ’er reading no more when I was about.” He looked victorious and contented.

“So, what d’you say to the kid?”

“Oh, I waits till they both comes in, see. I finds the paper in the scullery, where it ’adn’t got no business to be, and I sits down by the kitchen fire and does the pools while I’m waiting. Presently, in they comes, talking and laughing. Seems they’d taken the bus down to Trafalgar Square an’ spent the day wanderin’ round the National Gallary. Of all the ways for a boy of eleven to spend ’is time.” He spat again, and sipped his beer, while waiting the urging question which he knew would come.

“So what did you say about the books?” asked Alf, right on cue.

“Well, to begin with I didn’t say nothing. I lets him go on about the famous paintings

he's seen that day, an' how he'd read about some of the chaps what did them, an' how wonderful it was that their thoughts—that's what 'e said, thoughts,—was still there on canvass, 'undreds of years after they'd been painted, some of 'em. So I lets 'im run on, while Alice fills the kettle and such and then I says to 'im,

"Wot d'you want to be when you grow up, son? I says to 'im, thinkin 'e was going to say some tom-fool thing like 'a painter'. But 'e just stops talking and looks in the fire, an' then 'e says, quiet-like, as if 'e's talking to 'imself, in the 'igh falutin way 'e's learnt from 'is Mum an' 'is teacher;

"I think, most of all, I would like to become a philosopher!"

Bert's mirth overcame him for a minute or two, he wheezed and rumbled with laughter, and had to have recourse to his drink before he could proceed.

"Laugh! I thought I'd bust," he said, wiping his eyes. "You fancy you'd look kinda good in one o' them beards?" I says. 'You're a bit late in the day, son, philosophers went out with them Greek ruins like the Mansion House pushed about a bit.'

"No, Dad," he tells me, ever so serious like, 'there's been lots of them since then', and he reels off a string of names as long as my arm. Nasty, foreign names, most of 'em, as Communist sounding as all get out. I couldn't remember the half of 'em. But I plays him along a bit further. What do you have to do to get to be a philosopher? I asks, thinking he was going to say, 'read a lot of books', and that was going to be a good start for what I had to say. But he says looking serious as a parson 'I will have to learn to think.' Well that tickled me, and I began to tell him the one about Thought lying in bed

and thinking he was in the W.C., but Alice stops me. So then I asks him 'And what does writing poetry 'ave to do with thinking?' And he goes bright red, and says what did I mean. So I whips out the exercise book I found beside his bed, and some crumpled-up bits of paper from his wastebasket. I starts to read out some drivel about thoughts of great men going on and growing and taking root in new minds like 'tumbleweed of memory' or some such drivel. But he bursts out crying and tries to snatch the book and bits of paper away from me. 'They're mine, they're mine!' he's shoutin' and of course his Mum is on his side. But I shoves 'em in the fire anyway, and gives him a good talking to. You've got too much time on your hands, I says to 'im. What you want is a job for Saturdays and after school. Mr. Paterson 'as a notice in 'is window, wanting a boy to take groceries round on a bike, after school and on Saturday.

'He can't do that,' says Alice, 'you know he has his scholarship exam coming up, and his teacher thinks, if he does well, he may even get into Westminster School.'

"Well, that tore it. 'If you think,' I says to 'er, 'that any boy of mine is going to traipse to 'n from school looking like a monkey in a tail coat an' top 'at, 'n carrying 'n umbrella like a regular little cissie, you're wrong, I says, you've got another think coming. What's more' I says, 'I bin thinking about this scholarship business, and I don't 'old with it. Takin' a boy away from 'is 'ome environment an' givin' 'im ideas above 'is station! I do alright at the plumbin' don't I, and when 'e's finished with the Elementary, 'e can go on to the Second'ry Modern an' learn to do something with 'is 'ands. 'Oo

d'you think is going to keep you, I says to 'im while you're sittin' round tryin' 'ow to *think*?"

Bert paused to finish his beer, and took the glasses in his turn for replenishing. He felt dominant, self-righteous, the only level-headed member of a sadly scatterbrained family. He settled himself back in his seat. This time he didn't wait for Alf's prodding, but continued as though he had not interrupted himself.

"‘Oh, Dad,’ 'e says, ‘I wouldn't be sitting around. If I get to a good school and University,’ 'e says, ‘I could teach, become a professor or a librarian of one of the big University Libraries, or the British Museum—I could earn good money to send to you and Mum—I could translate books, maybe even write them.’

Well that was like a red rag to a bull, that was, talking to me about librarians an' books. ‘You look 'ere,’ I says to 'im, ‘I've made up me mind, I 'ave, an' you can tell your teacher from me you ain't taking no scholarship. You'll nip down to Mr. Pater-son's right smart after tea and get that job. That'll keep you out of mischief and learning a lot o' nonsense about *thinking*. I never done more than Standard Six meself, an' I don't need no old books to tell *me* 'ow to *think*. So you just shut your trap an' lets 'ave no more o' this philosopher bunkum. And when you do get some free time, you get out there in the Park and push a ball around with the boys, same as I did at your age.’”

He gazed reflectively into his dwindling beer.

“Reckon I'll buy the kid a football,” he said. “Just to show there's no hard feelings.”







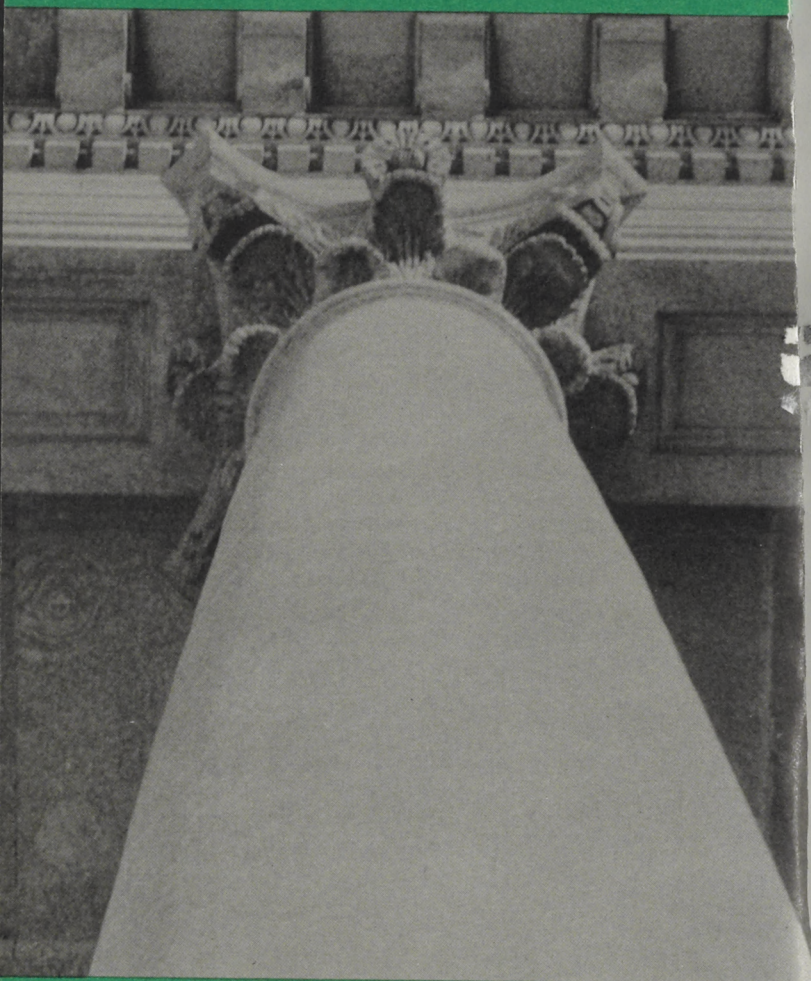


ASSEMBLING THIS BOOK
WAS LIKE PUTTING ON A
PAIR OF SOCKS WITH NO
HOLES IN THEM • THERE
WAS THE FEELING OF DIS-
COVERY.

THIS BOOK COULD NOT
HAVE BEEN CREATED IN
THE EAST, NOR ON THE
COAST, FOR IT IS PRAIRIE
IN SPIRIT. MAY IT BE A
STEP IN UNDERSTANDING
WHAT WE ARE.

NOEL HANCOCK, EDITOR

MARCH, 1962



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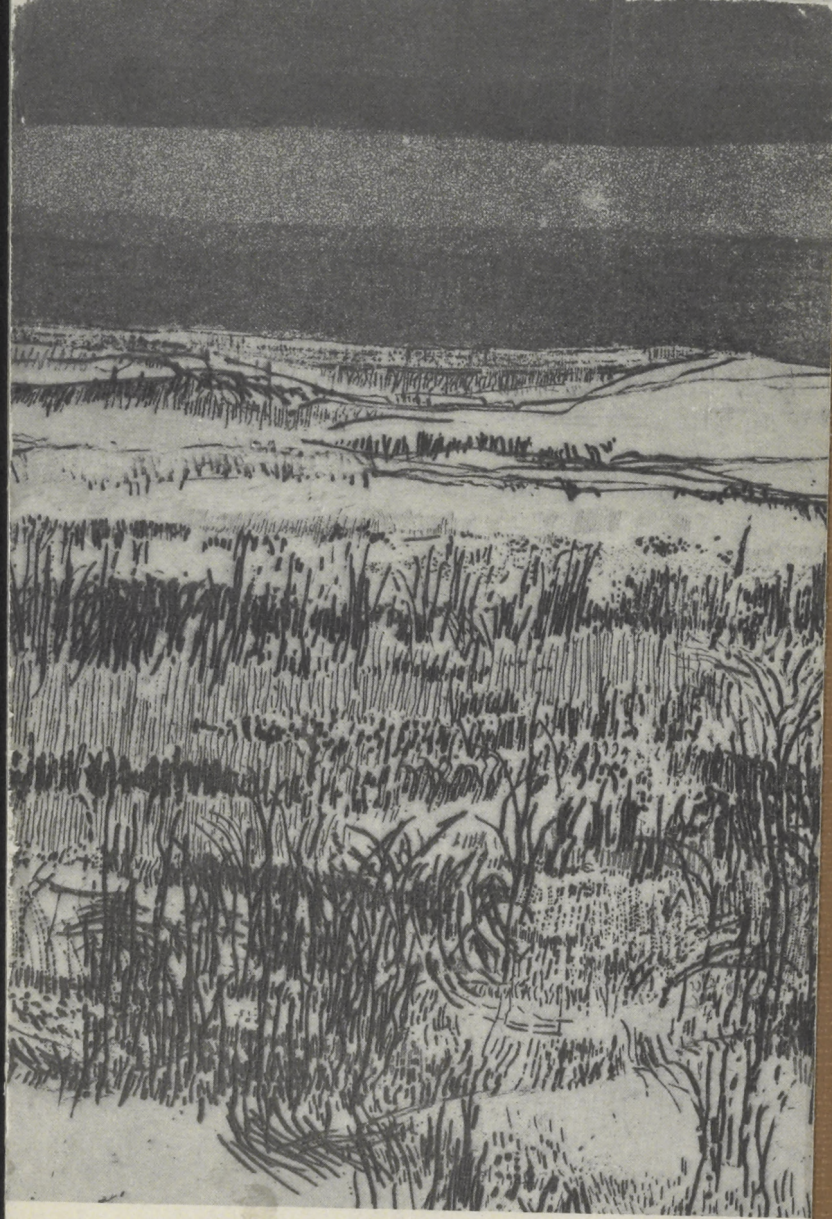
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